

Pulpit

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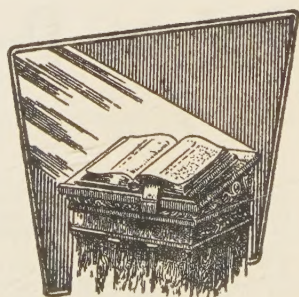
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EDITORIAL COMMENT

This issue is devoted to sermons for Lent and Easter. We are especially pleased to include a splendid series on Gospel Personalities by Dr. Armin C. Oldsen. The second emphasis highlights several Easter emphases.

Next month's themes will be "Sermons for Youth" and "Great Words of Faith: God." The April themes will be "The Family Circle" and "Christ-Centered Living."

BOOKS FOR PULPIT PREACHING

What's Right With Race Relations by Harriet Harmon Dexter is a moderate-sized book which contains a giant-sized message. The author presents a reasonable and judicious analysis of the historical, political, social, economic and psychological forces out of which racial tensions have been formed. This is followed by a documentary survey of the solid achievements now being made toward a fuller understanding of the problems involved and a greater appreciation of the peoples who make up our national life. Her manner is persuasive, her tone constructive, and her method one that highlights the human factors. (Harper & Brothers, 248 pp., \$4.)

Lincoln Finds God by Ralph G. Lindstrom, a Lincoln scholar and enthusiast, is a warm, penetrating story, told largely in Lincoln's own words, of his growing awareness of God and of his interpretation of and devotion to the principles which he embraced. This book gives a vivid portrait of

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Symbols of Faith

THE CHALICE



Friedrich Rest
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Made of silver and usually lined with gold, the large Holy Communion cup is known as the Chalice. While individual communion cups are being used more and more, at least in the churches of Christendom best known to us, the one cup remains as a simple, significant, Scriptural symbol. It takes us imaginatively back to the Upper Room where Jesus "took a cup and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, 'Drink of this, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.'" (Matt. 26:27-28.)

The main parts of the Chalice are the bowl, the stem, and the foot. Sometimes the stem has a knob encircling the middle of it as a convenience in handling. A six-sided base

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Pulpit Preaching

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A SERIES
ON GOSPEL
CHARACTERS

Personalities of
the Passion

Armin C. Oldsen, St. Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, Lakewood, Ohio

I. JUDAS, WHO LOVED MONEY MORE THAN CHRIST

The good that men do—and the evil—lives after them. Sometimes its influence is felt for years or even for centuries. Who has not admired and sought to emulate the kindly character of Lincoln? Who has not thrilled to the heroism of young David going forth to battle the giant Goliath? Who has not prayed for the faith of Abraham bravely moving out into an unknown country—with God? Who has not shuddered at the monstrous wickedness of Herod, slaying the innocent babes at Bethlehem? Who has not thought of the greed of Judas, which led to the crucifixion of Christ and his own hanging, and breathed a word of prayer, "O God, keep me content and faithful"?

God sees life as it really is. He presents it as it really is, not as we might wish it were. In the Bible He tells the life story of men and women as they really were, without playing them up or down. The example of their virtues is to be followed; their vices are to be shunned. Even the story of a man like Judas, who loved money more than Christ, while it can never be an inspiration to us, can be a powerful warning. It demonstrates in clear and unforgettable manner how a single passion can grow in a man's soul, like a cancer, crowd out everything that is good and noble, and finally kill it.

Greed did not die when Judas hurled the blood money into the temple and with a rope stopped the beating of his covetous heart. Greed is a spiritual disease to which everyone in our world is exposed; in fact, in our day it has just about reached epidemic proportions.

Ever since Adam blamed Eve for his downfall, men and women have been inclined to push the responsibility for their sinning into the shoes of others. There has been a growing tendency in our culture to blame the parents for all the follies and foibles in their grown children. The strong and abiding influence of the home cannot be stressed too often. But before God no man can excuse his vices by saying, "The parents whom you gave me compelled me to sin through all the years of my life." Before man responsibility for old-fashioned wickedness that comes from the heart is too often crowded back on the parents and the guilty person is coddled like a poor, unfortunate victim. There is much sinning in adult life with which parents have nothing to do whatever. And as long as a man can improve his life with God's help—every man can, including you—he must be held accountable.

Some have tried to excuse the betrayal and suicide of Judas by saying, "After all, the poor man never had a chance." What do you mean he "never had a chance"? You can almost count on the fingers of your hands the persons who have had the glorious opportunity of Judas. He must have had godly parents who loved their boy and were grateful for having him in their home. Look at the name they picked for him: "Judas." Judas means "Praise of God." In his early, formative years Judas no doubt received the same thorough religious training that all the other boys in Judea got. It was an education that included instruction, discipline, and love.

Look at the privilege Judas had when he lived for two years in close, personal association with Christ! He was sitting in the front row when Christ preached His matchless sermons. He was standing right there when Christ performed miracle after miracle. He took part in the intimate discussions with Christ on great spiritual truths. He had opportunities for which we might give almost anything in life. He could ask Christ, God's own Son, questions on religious matters. He could express his views and have Christ correct them. And yet, when His enemies killed Christ and He went to heaven, Judas killed himself and went to hell. Don't blame his parents for that. Blame Judas.

But don't get vicious in your denunciation. The sin of Judas can creep almost unnoticed into the life of any human being. You are capable of doing what Judas did. The tragedy of Judas was not a chance happening of some Thursday evening. It was a gradual development. The master passion of Judas was love of money, and since he was treasurer for the little group of disciples, temptation visited him often and long. There was not much money in the treasury, but one day some of it stuck to the fingers of Judas and fell into his own pocket. Some people would not recognize that what he did was wrong. Most people would regard it as a little sin. More than likely Judas did not even call it a sin. He was only borrowing and some day he would pay it back. And even if he did not, the amount was so small it would not begin to pay for all the bother he had taking care of the treasury. Have you noticed how Satan is ready to suggest an excuse when you want to do something that is wrong, so that you can hide your wickedness even from yourself? Judas got by with it. His fellow disciples did not notice his dishonesty. But his own conscience did. It became harder. It let him steal more often and larger amounts. Thank God when you get caught sinning!

The sins you get away with harden you and curse you, today and tomorrow.

Don't think for a minute that Judas was not warned. There was the time when he heard Christ say, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. For there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known. . . . Take heed and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." To Judas Christ's warnings must have been like tracer bullets aimed directly at him and leaving a trail that all might see how guilty he really was. Never say God does not warn you in your sin. The trouble is we ignore His warning day after day until the day after the fall. Then you look back and wail, "How could I have been so blind and stupid!"

In the classroom on the mountain Judas heard Christ put first things first, as God wants them put. At the head of the list Christ did not place the things that money can buy: food, drink, clothing. He said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness." He said, "I am the Door: by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture." Christ did not deny material needs. When men were hungry He fed them. When men were suffering from exposure, He wanted to help shelter them. Christ indicates clearly that life is not what He wants it to be when the stomach is empty, the feet cold, the head aching, and the body crippled. I am certain that Christ would look with favor on any effort on our part honestly to earn enough money to supply our needs to live comfortably, to establish a reasonable security. All of us are interested in that and it adds to our happiness to work for it. But Christ put spiritual needs ahead of all when He said, "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

When Judas began to follow Christ he must have loved Him. But as his love for money crowded into his heart, his love for Christ grew cold. At last he had to make a decision. What did he want more, Christ and His eternal salvation, or thirty pieces of silver, less than twenty dollars in our money, the price of the meanest slave? Judas took the money. For thirty pieces of silver he kissed Christ so that His enemies might know who He was and take Him captive. Even as he was about to kiss Him, Christ still called Judas friend. Think of it, and remember it; Christ had reason to denounce Judas with all the vehemence of His divine indignation. Instead, He called him friend.

With that the world of Judas crashed! A horror swept over him which, pray God, you may never know. Sin looks so different after it has been committed! In temptation sin is appealing, like red wine sparkling in a glass; in the accomplished act sin stings like a snake bite. For a moment Judas sat down by himself that dark night and looked out of the window of the past. The scenes of his association with Christ, especially of the last hours, tumbled through his mind in a tumult of confusion. It be-

gan happily with an invitation, "Follow Me!" It ended tragically, "Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?" Christ's sermon in the majestic beauty of the mountain, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. . . . No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to one, and despise the other."

For a moment Judas looked out of the window of the future. It was black as midnight, with no glimmer of hope. In desperation Judas tried to exchange the money that jingled uneasily in his pocket for the freedom of Christ. He pleaded, "I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood." Instead of assuring him of God's love and forgiveness through faith in the Messiah, they turned him away with a smirk, "What is that to us. See thou to that." That was too much. Judas took the money in his trembling hands and hurled it into the temple. But this act of madness did not relieve him. He took the road to the left. It led to a tree in the valley, death by his own hand, the condemnation of all generations, and hell without end. And it could all have been so different!

III. PETER, WHO LOVED SAFETY MORE THAN CHRIST

Peter was a man of action. There seems rarely to have been a dull moment in his life. He was constantly moving from one extreme to the other. The pathway that leads from saint to sinner and back again was well marked with the footprints of Peter. By nature he was most impetuous. Do you remember how he walked confidently on the water? Three seconds later he was sinking and calling for help. Do you recall his remarkable confession of faith in Christ, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God!" and how Christ praised him, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona"? Yet the very next minute he tried to tell Christ not to go to

Jerusalem to suffer and die, and Christ had to rebuke him. "Get thee behind Me, Satan." On the way to the Garden of Gethsemane, less than twelve hours before Christ's death, Peter boasted of his readiness to die for his Lord. In the Garden he could not even keep awake for his Lord. When the mob came out to take Christ prisoner, Peter swung his unskilled sword and demonstrated that he had the reckless courage to fight the entire Roman army.

Of all the Gospel stories in which Peter had a part, the story of his betrayal of Christ, in which he for a moment loved safety more than Christ, is best known and most fre-

quently told. For his great sin makes such an easy target, that almost everybody feels entitled to take a shot at it. In song and sermon Peter has been roundly condemned. Let's be fair and try to understand how Peter could have fallen so low. There is no merit in simply standing aside and shaking an accusing finger at some one who has done wrong. It won't help him and it won't help the person who shakes the finger. How could it happen that a man like Peter, a man of likable personality, deeply religious in nature and privileged to live in close companionship with Christ, should completely fail Christ when He needed him most?

What was Peter's weakness? If you want to understand a man you must know not only his strength, but also his weakness. If you really want to know yourself, then see clearly your greatest weakness. Knowing one's strength and developing it may lead to great accomplishment; knowing one's weakness and being careful not to put too great a strain on it, may prevent great tragedy.

Peter's greatest weakness seems to have been an exaggerated self-confidence. He was always sure of himself, or thought he was. It would serve no purpose here and now to seek to analyze the probable factors in his environment that made him somewhat of a boaster. With all his other excellent qualities his friends seem not to have resented unduly his occasional flashes of conceit. Even in the presence of Christ his false pride was sometimes in evidence. When Christ walked on the water Peter had to try it too. Christ held him up. The Bible does not say it, but I've sometimes wondered whether Peter did not perhaps strut a bit on top of the sea, with a "Look fellows!" attitude toward the other disciples. At least Christ let him go and a frightened and deflated Peter had to cry out for help.

Or take the night that Christ was walking for the last time with His dis-

ciples as they moved out to the Garden of Gethsemane. The hour was late and ominous. They walked in darkness and silence until Christ mentioned that all of the disciples would desert Him that night. Not one of them seems to have been blessed with a generous supply of meekness. They all contradicted Christ's prediction and, of course, Peter had to stand out in rejecting the thought that he would ever deny Christ. He did not fully trust the others, not even his brother Andrew and his good friends James and John. But in one man he had unwavering confidence. That man was Peter. Why, he would stay with Christ even if such loyalty meant death! For a moment, when the soldiers laid hands on Christ in the Garden, it looked as though Peter was going to carry out his promise. Peter's sword flashed awkwardly. A man's ear dropped off. And Peter ran.

Peter came back. There is no question that Peter loved Christ dearly. And we must admit that it took more than a little courage for Peter to walk into the courtyard of the high priest's palace that he might be near his Lord in His dark hour. But by this time Peter should have known that under strain his character was likely to resemble a handful of sand rather than a boulder. He was deliberately walking into trouble.

No doubt you know what happened. Christ had told Peter what would happen. "Before the rooster crows twice," he said, "you are going to deny Me three times." And that's what happened.

A girl asked Peter, "Are you not one of this Man's disciples?" Peter became frightened. No doubt there was some danger. Look at what was happening to Christ! Peter wanted to be safe rather than admit that he was one of Christ's disciples. True to his impetuous nature he quickly answered, "I am not!"

A lie usually complicates a problem. It did not relieve the fear of Peter. He was still in danger. The

time it was not a question, but a statement of fact addressed, not to Peter himself, but to those standing around the fire in the cool night air. This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth." Merely to lie about it again would have been useless. A lie, a mother of many kinds of sins. Peter denied any relationship with Christ a second time and emphasized it with an oath. Surely a man who would swear freely would not be one of Christ's disciples. Peter's enemies were not convinced.

A third time he was charged with being a follower of Christ, and this time the accusation was supported by evidence. Peter was from Galilee and his brogue gave him away. So anxious was Peter to be safe that he denied Christ for the third time, cursing and swearing all the while. The vulgar oaths and curses Peter had learned on the sea and which he had put aside since he had learned to know Christ, had not been forgotten. If you succeed with God's help in overcoming an evil habit in your life, bury it deeply, but never neglect the grave. That old habit may suddenly come to life again, when you are not ready for it.

Three things we want to remember from the life of Peter. In a world in which self-confidence is lauded and in which the man who can stand on his own feet and has to ask help of no one is loudly applauded, we want to hear Peter say in his First Epistle (if ever a man knew what he was talking about, he did!): "Be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble." To believe in one's self is an essential trait of a wholesome personality. But there are situations in life which only a fool would face with confidence in himself alone. No one can survive every emergency in life and death by his own power and wisdom. To believe in Christ as Lord and Savior, is to be ready for the rough miles in life and especially for death and God's final judgment. It is to go through life

with the confidence of a Paul, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

We want to remember how Peter found his way back to God. Christ looked at Peter after he had denied Him the third time and the fear in Peter's heart gave way to shame. In that look of Christ there was understanding and love. It said to Peter, "I feel sorry for you Peter. I warned you, but you would not listen to Me. You failed Me, but I am ready to forgive you." And Peter, rough and rugged man that he was, went out and cried, cried as though his heart would break because he had so completely failed Christ. When did you last cry over the sin in your life? I don't mean over the consequences of your sin. One young lady poured out her confession in a letter and closed with the statement, "If others had not found out about my sin I would not care." Sin is sin not because others find out about it, but because it is an offence against God. Peter's sin was a matter between himself and Christ and he felt terribly ashamed of it. He loved Christ and how can you hurt some one you love? After His resurrection Christ made it a special point to meet with Peter alone to assure him of complete forgiveness. With typical tenderness the Bible is silent on what was said at the meeting. But Peter's life after the meeting with Christ speaks eloquently about his joy over Christ's forgiveness. We want to remember that so that we may always know, also in the moment of our greatest shame, that Christ is ready to forgive us.

Finally we want to remember that Peter, who in a moment of weakness loved safety more than Christ, devoted the rest of his life to fearlessly preaching Christ as the Savior from sin. If all Christians were half as ready to follow the example of Peter's zeal in extending Christ's kingdom during the closing years of his life, as they are to condemn him for his denial in a moment of crisis, the

cause of Christian missions throughout the world would move forward in giant strides. Peter preached himself into jail. Under threat of death he was told to speak no more about Jesus Christ. His thrilling and defiant answer was, "We cannot but speak

the things which we have seen and heard." God speed the day when Christian people who have learned to know and love Christ will make that the driving force of their life, "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."

III. JOHN, WHO LOVED CHRIST

Let's observe at close range a man who took Christ seriously and loved Him with all his heart and all his life. His name was simply "John." He himself added a happy phrase, "John, the disciple whom Jesus loved." We must be careful not to misunderstand the man. Tender he was, in the full sense of the word, but he was not effeminate. A dreamer he was, in the good sense of the word, but he was not a man who lived in the clouds and whose feet never touched the earth. Take a good look at his face, if you get a chance; observe his hands; notice his muscles. They were rugged and rough and hard. John belonged to the laboring class. His life from early years was spent on the sea, holding the rudder in the sun and in the storm, tugging at the nets. Today he is sometimes pictured with a dove. His true symbol is the eagle. In paintings of Christ and the Apostles John usually is made to look most like Christ. That is not an accident. He is the holy writer who reports to all generations Christ's burning desire, "Love one another, as I have loved you."

Folks who live close to nature as God makes it, the farmer, the woodsman, the ranger, tend to be more religious than those who live in large cities. Trees and plants and flowers; sun, moon, and stars; mountains and lakes—are more conducive to serious thought about life and God and eternity, than are subways and skyscrapers, factories and market places. While he was out on the sea in the stillness of the night, with the bright stars twinkling overhead and their reflections dancing on the water all

around him, or while he was sitting on the white, sandy shore in the warm morning sun, untangling nets and removing weeds, questions must have come to John as they sometimes come to you and me. What does life mean? What is its purpose? A short, sad song and then silence forever? Was there a time when the sea and the stars did not exist? Who made them? Where did we come from? Why are we here? What will eventually happen to us?

Most of the answers to these questions John had received from his parents when he was only a little boy, or from the learned teachers in the synagogue. God made the world and man. Life is to be a loving service to God and neighbors. Life will go on forever after death. In the Messiah it can be a blessed eternity. What an opportunity John had to grow in knowledge and in faith in these matters! He was a contemporary of Jesus of Nazareth, John the Baptist, and Paul of Tarsus. He became personally and intimately acquainted with each of them. For two years he was a close companion of Christ. He recognized Christ as the long-promised Messiah for whom his people had been waiting for centuries. He gave up his fishing business to be with Christ constantly. He listened carefully when Christ spoke to the multitudes, to the disciples, or to him alone. He was right next to Christ during that unforgettable farewell in the upper room. He was not far away when Christ suffered terrible agony in the garden. When they nailed Christ to a cross and hung Him up to die, John could not keep away. He joined the

women who were sobbing softly at the foot of the cross. Christ noticed him and asked him to take care of his own mother. Two days later John saw his risen Lord in all His glory. He watched as Christ rose majestically to heaven. He seems to have been the youngest of the Apostles and to have outlived them all. According to one tradition he alone of all the Apostles died a natural death and lived to be almost a hundred years old. This we know, John lived to tell what he had seen and heard while in the company of Christ. He wrote five books of the New Testament, his Gospel, the Book of Revelation, and three Epistles, that all succeeding generations might share his faith and devotion. He speaks especially of God's great love in Christ and adds—were the words ever more desperately needed than now?—"Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another."

From day to day in his happy associations with Christ, and especially when he saw his Lord suffer and die for the sins of the world, John was overwhelmed with the great love that God has for man. Don't imagine for a moment that John is egotistical because he refers to himself with the appithet "the disciple whom Jesus loved." That is the foundation of Christian faith. There is no hope without it. There can be no faith without it. The glory of it is that Christ loves everyone that way.

Where the sunlight of God's love is permitted to shine in the garden of the human heart it destroys all the destructive germs of spiritual diseases: greed, jealousy, hatred, and anger, and causes the virtues to prosper and bloom. Once a man appreciates how much God loves him, even to the supreme sacrifice of having died for him on the cross, his emotions will respond in "an interlocking chain." If God demonstrated His love for you so clearly and still daily showers you with evidences of His love, how can you help loving God? John reminds

us, "We love Him because He first loved us."

This is strikingly set forth in the life of John. His courage took him into the courtyard among Christ's enemies and to the foot of the cross. His zeal and devotion in telling others about the Savior put him into prison and carried him in his old age to a lonely exile to the Island of Patmos. His loyalty and devotion did not spring up by themselves. They sprang from his love for Christ. There is no fear in love, no envy, no selfishness. They are found only in lust. You can be a sloyal, as fearless, as devoted as John was, if you like John will love Christ with all your heart. Our age has tragically perverted the meaning of love. The greatest satisfaction in life lies in loving and being loved. The highest joy in time or in eternity lies in loving Christ and being loved by Him. What a paradise this would be if men everywhere would take seriously John's admonition, "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another!" What a world of fear and sorrow it is, scarred by many an ugly war, bleeding from several wounds even now, trembling in fright and insecurity as the sword of war continues to dangle over it.

You may have heard the Persian legend that sets forth in striking manner the difference between what the world of men is and what God wants it to be. This is the legend: A man dreams that he is in a great banquet hall, brilliantly lighted and splendidly decorated. Many guests are seated at tables laden with a sumptuous and tempting meal. But no one is eating. Some monster has tied everyone's left arm behind his back and his right arm along a stick, so that no one can bend an elbow and bring the food to his mouth. In exasperation the guests have begun to quarrel and to hit and to kill one another. The man wakes up suddenly, deeply distressed by his dream.

A short time later he is dreaming again. He finds himself in a banquet

hall similar to the first. There are many guests and the food is the same. Again the arms of each guest have been tied in such a manner that everyone can touch the food but no one can bring it to his mouth. Yet all are eating happily and merrily. There is no strife. They have learned that while no one can feed himself, they can all feed one another across the table.

There you have the difference between the world of men as it is, and the world of men as it might be and as God wants it to be. The world of men as it is: a vast banquet hall; decorated as only God can decorate; supplied with food and resources as only God can supply; guests numbering

over two billion and able to live—if they will but love God and one another—happily and at peace. Instead they are hitting and killing one another, because most of them are concerned chiefly with what each can put into his own pocket. So the world goes its unmerry way, ignoring Christ who said, "Love one another, as I have loved you." Will men never learn?

If we could call on John for a closing word, I'm sure it would be what he so often told his friends in his blind old age: "My little children, God so loved the world He gave His Son; so love ye one another. Love God and men."

IV. CAIAPHAS, WHOSE RELIGION WAS A SHAM

The greatest crime that was ever committed on the face of the earth was undoubtedly the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and the Savior of the world. Who was primarily responsible for that crucifixion? Certainly not Pilate, because when Christ was brought to Pilate on Friday morning the sentence had already been pronounced, "He is guilty of death," and Christ Himself said to Pilate, "He that delivered Me unto thee hath the greater sin." Judas does not bear the greatest guilt for Christ's crucifixion, because when he asked the priests, "What will you give me, and I will deliver Him unto you?", Christ's enemies had already decided to execute Him. The thought of Christ's crucifixion did not originate with the mob, because it had sung "Hosanna" in sincere joy on Sunday morning, and when it screamed those monstrous two words on Friday, "Crucify Him!", it was echoing the desire of only a few leaders. The soldiers are not to be charged with the greatest responsibility for Christ's crucifixion because they were under orders when they nailed Christ to the cross. All of these had a part in the guilt of the crucifixion; no one in all

humanity is innocent of the blood of that just Man. You and I are responsible for Christ's crucifixion. But the chief responsibility falls on the man who plotted it. Who wrote the plot? It was a collaboration, of course, but one man was the leader. His name was Caiaphas, a powerful religious leader, but a man whose religion was a sham.

We will understand Caiaphas better and his part in Christ's crucifixion if we take a look at his father-in-law named Annas. Annas was the chief partner of Caiaphas in the crime of the crucifixion. Annas has been called a fiend. That is exactly what he was. His mind was as sharp as a sword and as cold and cruel; and where his heart should have been he had a stone.

When the twelve-year-old Jesus was asking those amazing questions of the priests in the temple, the religion of Israel (at least among the leaders) was almost dead. The heart had been taken out of it and all that remained was the lifeless form. We would call it simply formalism. That is, a religion of the hands and not of the heart. Rome, that ruled the people of Israel with an iron hand in a velvet

love appointed Annas high priest. That was a violation of the ordinance of God and of the old established custom of the Church. A secular government did not have the right to appoint a religious leader.

What made the appointment all the more flagrant was the fact that Annas was an infamous scoundrel. There was no question about the ability of the man; unfortunately all his aptitudes were weighted on the side of evil. He was a politician in the worst sense of the word; that is, he was interested in holding or controlling public office even in the church, and in using the power of that office chiefly for his own personal advantage.

For nine years Annas defiled the office of high priest, and when he retired he had developed what we would call an organization. He continued to direct the farce from the shadows. The fact that he was succeeded by five of his sons was not a coincidence. Then, Caiaphas, a son-in-law, was chosen for the high priesthood. When the sacred oil was poured on the head of Caiaphas and he put on the high priest's miter with a gold plate bearing the inscription "Holiness to the Lord," Annas was a gray old fox whose cunning turpitude had grown with the years. Annas was still active behind the scenes twelve years later, when Christ was put on trial. But it was Joseph Caiaphas who wrote the plot for His crucifixion.

Caiaphas had undoubtedly been reared in the best traditions of the day. While much of the religion had become a hollow form and a screen for selfish ambitions, the children of Israel still brought up their children with an emphasis on religious training. That's more than we can say for our age.

For a time Caiaphas was probably genuinely interested in religion. Yet when he entered the priesthood to make religion his life's work, he was utterly unspiritual. The man who occupied the office of high priest should have been a man of outstanding char-

acter. The responsibility of the office should have made him a better man. When Caiaphas became high priest he was living on a low level and so shamefully did he abuse his responsibility, that he continued to sink to a lower level still. He was deliberately wicked. He did not even try to look like a saint.

Caiaphas was a Sadducee. The Sadducees were the rationalists of the day, who followed the old principles of Aristotle's philosophy. Every teaching accepted by the fathers was first put through the wringer of their reason with which they squeezed out every thought that had to be accepted by faith. You can imagine what was left. The Bible tells us that they taught "there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit." From other sources we learn that the Sadducees denied the all-governing providence of God. They insisted that men suffer or prosper by their own hand or by blind chance. And Caiaphas, a Sadducee, was at the head of the church.

You may wonder why a Sadducee like Caiaphas should have been interested in the office of high priest. Why would he want to be at the head of a church and represent his nation before God? Quite frankly on account of what he could get out of it. The office of high priest brought power to Caiaphas. It was a position in which political intrigue flourished like weeds. Caiaphas pulled wires and slipped bribes and practiced blackmail in the manner of our worst politicians. He was the most influential man in his nation.

The office of high priest brought wealth to Caiaphas. Modern rackets are not startling compared with what Caiaphas and his cohorts accomplished. They controlled the sale of animals used for sacrifices, putting the prices as high as they dared. They controlled and charged for the examination of all animals that were sacrificed. They controlled the changing of the half-shekel temple tax into

temple coin, demanding about four and one-half cents for each exchange. Everything necessary for celebrating the Passover could be bought from them. Their annual "take" ran into thousands of dollars.

Do you see how valueless is the mere form of religion? When you take away the wrappings that bind a mummy, all that remains is an old corpse. When you remove the pious exercises of the hypocrite, all you have left is a dead soul. A religious life that is a sham is among the most terrible of sins. Paul, one of the outstanding Christians of all times, speaks of keeping up the forms of religion, but resisting its influence. When the form of Christianity means more to a man than its essence, that man is in danger of becoming what Caiaphas was. There are examples of it in the church today, especially among those who, like Caiaphas, have a "professional connection with religion." They may display an admirable zeal in defending their religious beliefs and in their very defense demonstrate that Christ's appeal for love

has had no influence on them. Others are more delighted in detecting "heresy" in the belief of another, than they are in the discovery that another believes in the Savior and will spend eternity with them. Christ's hands were open to all the world; there are those in our day who are inclined to close them and make fists out of them. Still others are more concerned about the proper position of the altar candles during worship than they are about the right attitude of the heart.

The great sin of Caiaphas was not what he did to Christ. His great sin was what he had become through the years, which made it possible for him to do what he did. It was his chief duty, as high priest, to announce the arrival of the Savior, and yet when Christ came He did not fit into the religion of Caiaphas. What a tragedy! What Caiaphas had come to stand for did not harmonize with what God's Son was and said and did. God could not be reconciled with the teachings of Caiaphas concerning God. That is why he killed Him!

V. SIMON, WHO CARRIED CHRIST'S CROSS

The story of lent is the story of choices. Practically every character whose part in the story of Christ's suffering and death is written in the Bible chose evil rather than good. One man seems to be a happy exception. He did a kind and helpful thing. He carried Christ's cross to the place of crucifixion when Christ could no longer struggle on with it. For that he is still being praised before Christian congregations. His act has become a symbol for the cross-bearing of all Christians. Unfortunately Simon, who carried Christ's cross, had no choice. He was compelled to act as he did. But his story is worth pondering.

One Friday morning in spring Simon was on his way to Jerusalem to take part in the great Passover festival. His long journey of hundreds

of miles across the hot sands of North Africa was almost at an end. Joy ruled the morning as he approached the city of which David had sung, "beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth." His heart must have beat high as he saw again from a distance how the sun played on the gilded roofs of the temple and bleached its marble colonnades. Everywhere groups of gay pilgrims were moving toward the gates of the city.

Suddenly the happy morning seemed as one of the strings of Simon's heart's harp broke. He found himself face to face with a funeral procession for three men who were about to die. Some one was walking ahead of each one of the condemned men carrying a slate on which was written the nature of their guilt. Two of them were obviously criminals, hard men

who had lived their lives in defiance of the laws of God and men, and whose whole demeanor on this last mile showed that they intended to die that way—defiantly.

The third man was a crushing sight. One can understand why the women of Jerusalem wept when they saw Him. He was an utterly exhausted and thoroughly beaten Man. Caked streaks of blood marked His pale, unshaven cheeks. The hair around His head was matted with dry blood. The sight of the white robe covering His back was ghastly. His hands trembled as they clutched the cross. Look at the horror He had lived through the last nine hours. There had been the unutterable agony in a garden at midnight; a sleepless night of mock trials, ridicule, and torture; the shock of a whipping that would have killed a man of slighter frame. No wonder Christ staggered so badly with the cross that it was clearly evident even to the heartless Roman soldiers that He would be able to carry it no farther.

Don't you think that we as members of the human race ought to blush with shame, not only at what humans were doing to the Son of God, but also at what other humans neglected to do? For three years Christ had been living among these people, showing them an unending list of kindnesses. He had healed their sick, restored their cripples, raised their dead, comforted their bereaved, forgiven all who came to Him with their guilt. Where were they? Christ needed help. The cross was too heavy for Him. And nobody stepped forth to help Him.

Then a soldier turned to Simon who had come to celebrate and brusquely said, "You carry it!" Simon did not dare to disobey such a command. Christ crawled from under the cross and Simon stooped to take His place. And the procession slowly moved on toward Calvary.

What Simon did that spring morning when he carried Christ's cross

was not remarkable as a feat of strength. Artists usually picture the cross as a structure of huge beams. Some years ago I helped cut such a cross out of a live oak and erect it in a churchyard at Valparaiso, Indiana. I know that cross, while not as large as those of many famous paintings, weighed over 500 pounds. The cross on which Christ was crucified must have been crudely made and just strong enough to hold the weight of its victim. Any normal man could have dragged it several blocks. We remember what Simon did, not because it was a demonstration of unusual strength, but because it is a picture of what all of us must do, especially those of us who would be true followers of Christ.

Crosses can come into our life with startling suddenness. Life shifts gears quickly, and often without warning. Simon never dreamed that a day which dawned so happily would soon find him chafing under a cross. He was going to celebrate. It would be a wonderful day of impressive worship and merry-making with old friends. Instead, he was struggling with a burden, perspiring and soiling his clean clothes. He was carrying an instrument of death, as revolting to him as the handling of a hangman's noose would be to us. Much worse, in fact, because he was defiling himself ceremonially. How often have you been compelled suddenly to change your plans because a cross stood in the way you wanted to go?

The soldier said to Simon, "You take the cross of Christ." It was not a pleasant assignment. It took Simon to Calvary as a witness of Christ's crucifixion. He seemingly learned to know Christ as his Lord and Savior. Tradition gives him credit for establishing Cyrene, where he lived, one of the first Christian churches. In writing to the Romans the Apostle Paul sends greetings to "Rufus chosen in the Lord and his mother." There is good reason to believe that they were the son and wife of Simon. If Simon

had come to Jerusalem five minutes sooner or later, or by another gate, he and his family might not have become Christian. The cross under which Simon chafed that Friday morning led to eternal blessing.

Christ appeals to you, "Take your cross and follow Me!" In fact, He makes the cross an indispensable condition of Christian discipleship. He warns, "He that taketh not his cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me." By "cross" Christ does not even mean the inevitable afflictions to which all flesh is heir. He means the sacrifice and the self-denial and the suffering that come into your life because you are a Christian.

What does it cost you in time and effort, in comfort and contributions, to be a Christian? What do you know about suffering for Christ's sake? Do you know what it cost some of the

early Christians to be followers of Christ? They gave up everything earthly, even their lives. They faced not merely the ridicule of a sophisticated world. They faced a vicious enemy who burned them alive or had them torn to pieces by hungry lions.

A writer complains that we have made Christianity too easy and too cheap. If you are a true follower of Christ you will count no sacrifice for Christ too great, you will consider no suffering too severe, and you will look upon no hardship as being too difficult. You may sweat and groan under a cross, but you will sing all the while,

The consecrated cross I'll bear
Till death shall set me free;
And then go home my crown to wear
And there's a crown for me.

God bless you through the cross!

VI. THE CENTURION, WHO CONFESSED CHRIST

A confession of Christian faith sometimes comes from strange quarters. It was a Roman centurion, a soldier of a heathen nation, who demonstrated that he had such a remarkable faith in Christ, that Christ Himself marveled and said to those about Him, "I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel." Again it was a Roman centurion, the captain of the guard of soldiers that had been assigned the task of crucifying Christ, who made a most thrilling confession of faith. As he stood by the cross on which the Savior had just died, he called out. "Certainly this was a righteous Man. Truly this was the Son of God."

A stranger confession has never been heard. After executing a condemned Man, the Roman centurion, whom tradition has given the name Longinus, was overwhelmed with the conviction that an enormous mistake had been made, and he courageously pronounced his Victim righteous and divine. The priests had said of the Man who had just died, "He is guilty

of death." The mob had screamed "Crucify Him!" The Roman procurator had consented to His execution and had given the order for the crucifixion. But the Roman centurion, unable to restrain himself after what he had seen and heard and felt, defied the priests, the mob, and a Rome with a clear and bold confession, "This was a righteous Man and the Son of God." How God can reaffirm the truth, even when it has been nailed to a cross, even through those who have nailed it there!

Let's go back to that old, old story of Christ's crucifixion. It may well be that our faith will ring out more clearly as we observe through the eyes of the Roman centurion what happened so long ago. It was early on a Friday morning in the spring that Longinus heard the command, "Crucify these men!" The order was not altogether unexpected. Rumor had been predicting that Christ, the Prophet of Nazareth, who for three years had been traveling about the country, calling sinners to repentance, assuring the

penitent of forgiveness, blessing the children, cheering the discouraged, comforting the bereaved, healing the sick, raising the dead, would Himself call victim to the hatred of His enemies. His life had been lived in terms of love and sacrifice for even the most cowardly of men. The people had heard Him gladly and had flocked to Him in large numbers with their spiritual doubts and questions, with their guilt and fear, with their physical aches and deformities. But those in positions of power and influence had become afraid of Him because His blessed ways exposed and emphasized their corruption.

Two others were to be crucified with Christ, criminals of the blackest stripe. Hundreds of thousands of visitors had come from all parts of the world to celebrate the annual Passover Festival. Many of them would witness the execution. Practically all of them would hear about it. The Roman government never missed a chance to strike fear in the heart of those who were inclined to break Roman law. Christ had preached love as the force that would draw all men together under God and that would turn the earth into a beautiful garden. Men believed in force of arms administered by soldiers. They still do! That is why our earth looks more like a battlefield than like a garden.

"Crucify these men!" The command was not unusual. Ghastly scenes and brutal assignments were part of a soldier's business. By repeated contact with the inhuman a soldier's heart became hard and not easily touched by fear or pity. But God can go right through the callouses on a man's heart and touch it where it will respond. God can in a moment frighten the boldest and toughest of men and let them know that He is God and they are only small and pitifully insignificant men. A man whose hands had callouses from handling a sword and whose heart was not easily touched, was profoundly moved by witnessing Christ's crucifixion and death and he

burst out, "Certainly this was a righteous Man. Truly this was the Son of God."

"Crucify these men!" It was about nine o'clock in the morning when the command was given. The soldiers were ready with the implements of torture. From the start it was evident that this crucifixion would be different. It was Christ who made the difference. Others about to die were usually stoical or cowardly; Christ was calm and confident. Others were bitter and vindictive; Christ was kind and forgiving. How grateful He was when Simon relieved His beaten body of the heavy cross! How sad He was when He had to warn the weeping women of the impending doom of their city! How brave He was when He refused to drink the anesthetic provided for by wealthy ladies of Jerusalem to all victims of crucifixion! How composed and submissive He was when they nailed Him to the cross! His exhausted body stretched over the rough wood lying on the ground — the open palms that had often blessed but never hurt — the sharp iron spikes — the lifted mallet — no, I must not seek to describe the details of the crucifixion. Some may feel called upon to give a gruesome recital of everything that happened as Christ suffered on a cross. The simple fact is that practically all of us would have shuddered if we had been actual eye witnesses of a crucifixion. Some of us would have fainted. Yet infinitely more important than the arousing of our sympathies for Christ's suffering is an understanding of who He was and why He died as He did. A man's Christianity is not to be measured by his emotional upset as he thinks about the physical agony Christ endured at the close of His life. A man's Christianity is to be measured by his understanding and appreciation of the fact that the Son of God Himself became man and lived and died for him that he by faith might have forgiveness of all his sins and some day receive heaven

forever as a gift of God's grace.

The Centurion could not remain silent. The holy nobility of Christ's life, the majestic heroism of His suffering, the divine love in His forgiveness, the sublime triumph of His death, and the unmistakable signs from Heaven forced from his heart and lips the amazing confession, "Certainly this was a righteous Man. Truly this was the Son of God." Longinus had never studied theology. He probably had never read the Old Testament Scriptures. It is unlikely that he had listened to the arguments for Christ's divinity. Yet it was all so clear to him, and so convincing. Christ was the Son of God. He Himself had said it, and righteous Man that He was, He could not have lied.

How much more reason you and I have to join the Centurion in his confession!

Longinus could never again have been the same. No man who meets Christ and recognizes Him as the Son of God can ever be quite the same. "If

any man be in Christ," the Apostle reminds up, "he is a new creature." The Centurion could never have forgotten what he had seen and heard. Is it too much to assume that he returned to Jerusalem and finally learned to know that Christ was also his Savior? Did he realize that although he had helped to kill Christ, Christ had died also for him? John Newton has him sing,

With pleasing grief, and mournful joy,
My spirit now is filled,
That I should such a life destroy,
Yet live by Him I killed.

Calvary can be the most terrible place in the world or the most blessed. It is terrible if you join in the mockery of Christ or even pass by in indifference. It is a most blessed place if you can gaze on Christ dying for the sins of the world and say, "This was the Son of God. Christ is my Savior forever." God's Holy Spirit lead all of us to such a confession!

WORTH QUOTING

E. Paul Hovey, The Federated Church, Lewiston, Idaho

Peace, which Paul lists as the third fruit of the Spirit . . . is impossible without patience. About a century ago Oliver Wendell Holmes was visiting the summer social colony at Newport. While there he overheard this remark: "After all, when a woman is well-dressed, she has a peace of mind which no religion can give." But the old Yankee poet realized that any peace of mind is very precarious if it has no other foundation than that of sitting on the height of fashion. In fact it is the effort to keep up with the passing show that so often destroys our inner peace. Ours is called the "Age of Tension"; and "a war of nerves" is going on . . . Not many of our nervous breakdowns are caused by the international tenseness. Most of us have to confess that what wears our nerves ragged and worries our minds most is the race to keep ahead

in the competition of our own social and business circles.—Ralph W. Sockman in "By Their Fruits."

In the learning process the teacher is like a light meter and the pupils are the camera. The teacher's task is to make the proper exposure for the pupil.—Curtis Winkle.

The thought "known but to God" applies to everyone; it can bring terror or a wonderful kind of peace.

—Robert C. Dodds

Is God such a stranger that I hesitate to ask Him anything?

—Leonard G. Clough

A member of a party viewing a sunset exclaimed: "I wish the others had come. What a pity that anyone had to miss it!" It was not just for

us. We have a sense of wanting to share. Life is to be measured by the experiences which are too profound to be enjoyed in isolation. When religion becomes searchingly personal it becomes universal. By its very nature it is an experience that must be shared with others. Not imposed, but shared. There is a subtle but distinct difference. Often in our zeal to share we impose. This is not only deceiving, but also immoral. Christianity can be lived convincingly when it cannot be taught formally.—John Leamon.

* * *

Next to knowing when to seize an opportunity, the most important thing in life is to know when to forego an advantage.—Disraeli.

* * *

God bent the eyes of all other creatures downwards, . . . but the eyes of man He set high, that he may behold heaven.—Philo.

* * *

Everything in the world can be imitated, except truth, for truth that is imitated is no longer truth.

—Mendel

* * *

An argument has two sides and no end.

* *

The love of liberty is the love of others; the love of power is the love of ourselves.—William Hazlitt.

* *

Do we have the freedom to forfeit eternity? When does the second chance become the last chance? I do not know. I believe in the life everlasting. I believe God is love as well as justice. I trust Him. I am sure there is an answer in His infinite wisdom. But I cannot believe God's love closes the door to redeemability. When man comes to himself, I believe the Father will be waiting for him. The son who was lost is found again. Does the time come, however, when the privilege of forgiveness has been exhausted, the lie cast and forever?

There is a hell. Have we not lived

in it? Remorse, regret? The brutal word, the selfish deed, the immortal act! Memory is both blessing and curse. There is not only the power of a great memory, but the evil act lives on, never to be forgotten. . . . it is right here that so much of our bad mental health develops. The weight of wrong breaks our backs. We must have help, forgiveness. And with Him there is plenteous redemption. God's love is unfailing, we say. Does it cease to operate when I become the new being that follows death? Is God's love toward me but the ephemeral interest that a man might have in a mosquito that is here an hour or two and gone? Surely not. . . . Surely a God Who sent His Son out of love continues to be the seeking God Who forever seeks the lost coin, the lost sheep, the lost son.

—G. Bromley Oxnam

* * *

Never throw away hastily any old faith, tradition or convention. They may require modification, but they are the result of the experience of many generations.—Oliver Lodge.

* * *

Happiness is difficult without some comfort. . . . But happiness is not joy. Joy springs only from creative activity, and by some mystery we do not understand creation is almost always integrated with pain. All intense effort— — the effort of the mother in childbirth, of the athlete, of the scholar, working in intense intellectual concentration, or of the saint in his intense spiritual concentration, of the artist, of the craftsman — has in it an element of pain, for effort stems from the urge to rise above one's own limitations, to do what is beyond one's strength and capacities. Effort is by nature uncomfortable. Yet only through effort does anyone find exhilaration and joy. . . . To men and women of genius . . . because they lived, and suffered, and worked, all men after them can, if they will, live more than they would otherwise have done. That is part of the miracle.

—Dorothy Thompson in "The Courage to be Happy." * *

The reward that the faithful servants received . . . in the parable of the pounds . . . was not a reward which they could enjoy by sitting down and folding their hands and doing nothing. The one was put over ten cities and the other over five. The reward of work well done was more work to do. The greatest compliment we can pay a man is to give him ever greater, and ever harder tasks to do. The great reward of God to the man who has satisfied the test is more trust. —William Barclay in "The Gospel of Luke." * * *

Courage has always seemed to me to be that quality of mind that faces danger without fear, or endures pain, disappointment, grief, or loss with fortitude. I had thought of it, indeed, as

the spirit that bravely endures unhappiness. . . . These (tend to) discourage. . . . It is rather that which seeks to inspire, animate, inspirit. . . . Courage . . . is nothing less than the power to overcome danger, misfortune, fear, injustice, while continuing to affirm inwardly that life with all its sorrows is good; that everything is meaningful even if in a sense beyond our understanding; and that there is always a tomorrow. It is part of the religious sense of life that sometimes exists in people without formal religion and is lacking in many religionists. —Dorothy Thompson in "The Courage to be Happy." * * *

There is no man so good, who, were he to submit all his thoughts and actions to the laws, would not deserve hanging ten times in his life.

—Michel de Montaigne

BOOKS FOR PULPIT PREACHING — from page 2

spiritual growth which helps us better to understand both Lincoln but also genuine religious experience. (Longmans, Green & Co., 120 pp., \$3.)

Reflections on the Psalms by C. S. Lewis is, as the title suggests, an informal and familiar discussion on the Psalter, its language, themes, and relevance. Although the author makes no pretensions in terms of scholarship, the book is, nonetheless, one of great depth, discernment, and suggestiveness. It will inspire lay readers and become an aid to greater understanding and appreciation for pastors. (Harcourt, Brace and Co., 151 pp., \$3.50.)

Bible Women Come Alive by Hazel M. Nelson presents dramatic monologues on forty biblical personalities. The best-known women are represented, along with such women as the serving maid who taunted Peter and the wife of Peter. The sketches are imaginative, creative, and often skillfully written. The book ought to serve well the program chairmen of

youth and women's groups. (Abingdon Press, 144 pp., \$2.)

The Gospel of the Incarnation by George S. Hendry of Princeton Theological Seminary is a solid and valuable exposition in the field of theology which, fortunately, avoids the abstract and obtuseness of much learned writing. The author does pastors a service by making essential their reconsideration of the incarnation and of its meaning in gospel preaching. "It is the main contention of the book," says the author, "that the preoccupation with single elements of the gospel, such as the incarnation or the atonement, to the relative neglect of others, has been the bane of Christendom . . . The more specific thesis is that the principal cause of this fragmentation of the gospel has been the neglect of the incarnational life of Christ. . . . I have tried to show that the meaning of both the incarnation and the atonement must be sought in the life of Christ, if we are to be delivered from extraneous

and divisive theories and enabled to recover the wholeness of the gospel." (Westminster Press, 174 pp., \$3.75.)

Creative Giving by Hiley H. Ward packs a wallop. The author, who writes with great sincerity and force, challenges the traditional methods of giving, including the tithe and the emphasis on stewardship, and introduces giving that is spontaneous and

creative. His message is persuasive, his illustrations vivid, his practical suggestions significant, and his biblical authority convincing. Whatever else he achieves, he does focus attention upon customary procedures and asks us to re-evaluate them. This always serves useful purposes. (The Macmillan Co., 170 pp., \$3.75.)

SYMBOLS OF FAITH — from page 2

of a Chalice represents the six attributes ascribed to the Creator: wisdom, majesty, power, love, mercy, and justice. A cross on the base is engraved to mark the side for communicating.

Chalices differ greatly in degree of ornamentation. The plain Chalice, without ornamentation, dates back to the catacombs at Rome. In turn, one may assume it goes back to the "cup of blessing" used by the Jews at the Passover feasts in the days of Jesus.

A crown of thorns or a wreath, sometimes drawn around the bowl of the Chalice or Sacred Cup, reminds us of our Lord's suffering and death, and of His continued love for His people until the end of time.

Above the Chalice is sometimes pictured a round wafer, inscribed with an IHS or IHC monogram of Jesus, or the letters INRI which appeared on the original cross of Calvary. Since the circle is a symbol of eternity, the round wafer may be said to refer to the bread of eternal life. "He who eats this bread will live forever."—(John 6:58.) The custom of using round bread dates from early Christian times; the unleavened Passover cakes of the first Christian century were round.

The famous Antioch Chalice of the fourth century, discovered in 1910 and believed to be the oldest known Chalice, is decorated with 57 rosettes in a circle around the bowl below the top edge and twelve vines encircling twelve seated figures. The Antioch

Chalice has an oval inner cup. Reproductions in miniature of the original Antioch Chalice follow the general pattern, but do not attempt to follow the detail of the ornate exteriors.

Zwingli passed the wine in a wooden cup to his reformed congregation, seeking to go back farther than the Middle Ages, even to the early centuries before silver and goldsmiths began to apply the art of ornamentation. Gold interiors were considered superior to baser metals for keeping constant the taste of the wine, since there was no chemical reaction of the alcohol in the wine to the better metal. The interior of the cup could be maintained without tarnish if gold were used, the reasoning continued, and the silver plate wouldn't wear well when frequently cleaned.

Pictures showing combinations of the Chalice with blood flowing from the Lamb (Rev. 5:6) or from the pierced side of our Lord on the cross (John 19:34), or from the smitten rock (I Cor. 10:4), or from the pelican in the piety to emphasize the flowing of blood for eternal redemption.

Special meanings of the Chalice include Gethsemane, when it is accompanied with a cross of suffering; St. John, when a serpent is issuing from it; the priestly office, when it is standing on a closed book with a stole.

(The illustration for this article is reprinted from *Our Christian Symbols* by Friedrich Rest by permission of the Christian Education Press, Philadelphia.)

THEODORE P. FERRIS
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The Easter Message

THE SEPULCHRE AND THE SUN

Theodore P. Ferris, Trinity Church, Boston, Massachusetts

And very early in the morning, the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun." That is a line from St. Mark's account of the resurrection of Jesus. The sepulchre and the rising of the sun. Could any two things be in more vivid contrast? The sepulchre — cold, dark, a house of death, the end of human life. The rising sun — warm, bright, beautiful, the beginning of a new day. And isn't it true that, from one point of view at least, life is pretty much a race between the sepulchre and the rising sun? Life is always galloping on ahead trying its best to avoid death, and death is always creeping up from behind, hard on the heels of life, and sooner or later it overtakes it.

In the long view of that race, the sun wins; life comes out ahead. In the realm of nature, for example, death always pours itself back into life. When a tree dies, it doesn't simply disappear; it decomposes, and it gradually works itself back into the soil which in turn produces another tree. And in the realm of human nature, it is not greatly different. One generation is mowed down by war that another generation may live in relative peace. One generation makes its contribution to the civilization of the world that the next generation may stand upon its shoulders. In other words, in this bird's-eye view of the race between life and death, the sepulchre and the sun, death is a phase of life. It is held within the context of life, it is a function of life, and in that long view of things life wins.

But as far as individuals are concerned, the sepulchre wins every time. When a tree falls, that is the end of

that particular tree; it may contribute itself to the production of other trees but that particular configuration of branches against the sky will never be seen again. And when a person dies, that is the end of that particular person, that particular smile, that unmistakable tone of voice, that characteristic bearing, all the things that make that person precious to you, will never be seen again among us.

Wilfred Owen was one of the fine lyric poets of Great Britain. During the First World War he was terribly sensitive to the spectacle of death, and the enormous harvest that it reaped, especially as he saw young men killed, men who before their time were taken from us. He wrote a poem about one of them as he saw him lying in the snow.

Move him into the sun—
Gently its touch awoke him once,
At home, whispering of fields un-
sown.
Always it woke him, even in
France,
Until this morning and this snow.
If anything might rouse him now
The kind old sun will know.

The sun could wake the seeds and rouse the seasons, but the sun could not stir him, and he calls his poem "Futility."

I do not wish to take too dim a view of things, but it seems to me that if we are honest and face the facts with anything like fairness, we must come to the conclusion that for all that nature can tell us, as far as we as individuals are concerned, the sepulchre swallows up the sun, death wins the race every time. Organically speaking, our identity is lost in death.

as nature plows us back into the soil from which she will then make new men.

I

But the particular sepulchre mentioned in the text that I read has some amazingly revealing light to throw upon this whole subject. This particular sepulchre is the one that Jesus was laid in, tenderly, by a friend on a Friday, late in the afternoon as the sun was setting, and if ever there was a vivid, decisive demonstration of the triumph of death over life, this was it. Here was a vibrant, young, good life. The heaviest battallions of the church and state were turned against him and they nailed him to a tree; they killed him there, in the prime of his life. His dreams about the future of the human race were pricked, like a balloon, by the common sense of plain men and women. Man's natural, selfish, cruel nature lined up against him. He didn't have a chance, and no wonder the Evangelist wrote into the story when he recorded it, even though it may not have been an actual fact, that "there was darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour." The sun licked, you might say, by the sepulchre! If ever love's labor were lost, this was the time. If ever the sepulchre made a fool of the sun, this was it.

This was the sepulchre that the women came to at the rising of the sun, and to their amazement they found it empty. The body of Jesus was nowhere to be seen and they jumped to the conclusion that someone had stolen it. Later in the day, to their utter amazement, they saw him, and his friends saw him on several occasions after that. The general public did not see him, but his friends and followers were convinced that they saw him. I do not wish to discuss here the details of the resurrection stories and the problems that they bring up. I know the problems. I have struggled with them, but they are not relevant at this particular time. The only relevant point is this: whatever his

friends saw, whatever they saw, convinced them that he was not dead, and it is hard to believe that they would have been convinced that he was not dead if they hadn't seen anything. They had seen death too vividly drawn to forget it. What they saw led them to believe that he was alive, and what they believed henceforth colored everything they saw.

They saw the Christ-Spirit come back among them. They saw with the eye of their mind that love's labor was not lost. They saw that the inimitable trust of Jesus in the father's love had not been throttled, had not been crushed under the heel of a cruel world, but that it had come back and that it was cropping up in all sorts of strange places and persons, the way grass comes up between a crack in the rocks where you would think nothing could possibly grow. And they saw young, anxious, disillusioned people catching this Spirit and beginning to trust God the way Jesus had trusted him. That compassion, the like of which they had never seen before, in a world that was in some ways no worse than ours, I am sure, but certainly a harder-hearted world than ours, that compassion they saw coming back and they saw stiff, self-centered people begin to grow warm with the love of their fellow human beings so that they shaded their property with them. The power that they had seen in Jesus, the power that could lift people right off their feet and make them into new, self-respecting human beings, they saw that power come back and take hold of people, not something men were vainly reaching for, something they would like to have, but a power that knocked them over. They knew that the sepulchre was empty because they knew that Jesus was alive.

The extraordinary thing is that nothing has even been able to kill the Christ-Spirit. The church has done its best and almost killed it on many occasions with its heavy, cumbersome,

ecclesiastical machinery, and rich brocaded vestments that hide the simplicity that was in Jesus, its elaborate ceremonies and rituals, and yet, just when you think it has almost smothered the spirit of Christ, in a little hill town of Assisi, the spirit, pure as the spirit of Christ, comes back. Or, in a German prison camp during the last war, in the midst of all the disillusionment and under the threat of tyranny and death, in people like Pastor Bonhoeffer, the Christ-Spirit comes back.

You might think our secular materialistic society would destroy the Christ-Spirit if anything could, and sometimes I wonder why in the world it doesn't. You marvel at the fact that the spirit of Christ can survive at all in a civilization that is preoccupied with the biggest possible automobiles and the best equipped homes and pleasure on an increasingly grander scale, and all the other things that preoccupy us. And yet the Christ-Spirit can't be killed.

II

This is at least part of the meaning of Easter, nothing can ever kill Christ. And this, you see, has an enormous bearing on the race between the sepulchre and the sun that we were thinking about a few minutes ago. There are many more factors involved in this race than appear on the surface, and many more than I am afraid most people take into consideration. At one extreme is the man who thinks that a human being is a creature doomed to die and at the other extreme there is the person who thinks that man is a creature made in the image of God and therefore destined to immortality. Both are wrong. Both are oversimplifying the situation.

The supreme factor in this race of life with death is the victory of Jesus over death. And the point of that victory is that it is not life that wins the victory over death. It is love! It is not physical energy that wins the race against death. The healthiest, sturdiest, most robust person you know

may be the least likely to rise from the dead. It is a quality of life that can resurrect life. One actual instance of it on our own plane of history which I hope will suggest it on a larger, far more vast scale. In a recent book we are told the story of an old rambling house in southern England where a man by the name of Mr. Lyward for twenty-five years has been welcoming the most delinquent boys that could be found in England. Boys guilty of every sort of misdemeanor and crime have been sent to him. He runs it as a school and as a home. He has raised those delinquent boys from the dead by what he calls "the love that waits." This is an imitation of the kindness that can win the race against death.

The real race is not a race between the sepulchre and the son, but a race between the sepulchre and the Son of righteousness, and in that race the sepulchre hasn't a ghost of a chance. The victory of Jesus over death, of course, in the race that we have been describing, is not a victory that you could photograph the way you could photograph the victory of Grant over the southern army under General Lee at Appomattox; it is a victory that you can participate in, share in. Here again, to use a figure from our own familiar life, you can share in it the way a small boy can, if he wants to share in the victory of his older brother, and be glorified by it.

III

Someone asked William James, "Do you believe in personal immortality?" To which he answered, "Never keenly, but more strongly as I grow older." "Why?" the person asked. "Because I am just getting fit to live." Bold as it may seem to say it, I think I know a better answer! Much as I admire William James, and much as I trust his judgment in great matters, I think I know a better answer. I could go with him in the first part. Do you believe in personal immortality? Never keenly, not in my early life; I had no concern for it one way or the other.

But more so, much more so, as I grow older. Why? Because I know that you cannot kill the Christ-Spirit. He is part of the very nature of things, and I know that that Christ-Spirit is more and more in me as I grow older, and

his victory is a victory that I can share, and because he lives and because his love is supreme, and for no other reason, I shall live also. "And they came to the sepulchre at the rising of the sun."

SEEING THE RISEN LORD

John R. Weinlick, Moravian Theological Seminary, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania

One of the most thrilling sentences of the Bible is a brief statement in the 20th chapter of the Gospel of John: "Mary went and said to the disciples, 'I have seen the Lord'." This is the first eye-witness report of Christ's resurrection.

Have you ever wondered, as I have, why such an announcement did not make more of a stir in Jerusalem? It seems strange that a man rising from the dead should not have excited more people. When I check the details of the Gospel story I find a plausible explanation. The resurrection did not excite Jerusalem because hardly anyone knew about it. The risen Christ showed himself to only a few persons, only to those who knew him well before he was in the grave. Those who did see him were at first reluctant to announce it beyond the circle of his loyal followers. Many probably whispered rather than shouted for at the moment the news was still something to be handled as a quiet secret.

The resurrection was not accompanied by fanfare. It was revealed quietly and privately to a few who had faith in Jesus before it happened. These few became the key individuals in spreading the news after Pentecost, the day on which the disciples became free to share their secret with the world. The transformation which took place in them left no doubt that they had seen their Lord alive after his crucifixion.

The resurrection remains the key-stone of our faith. We agree with Paul: "If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is vain." That is why we

Christians make so much of this day. We celebrate Easter with mass rejoicing, for we want the world to know about this thing upon which the Gospel rests its claims. Yet there remains something very private and personal about Easter. It's easy enough to say with a large company of worshippers, "The Lord is Risen!" Can you say it with conviction when you're alone? Or can you say to one or two of your friends, "I have seen the Lord?" I don't mean that a mystic vision of the Christ should have appeared to you. What I am asking is, "Do you feel that Jesus is living today because you have felt him to be alive in you and in the Christian community around you?"

I

Return for a moment to the first Easter. The post-resurrection appearances of Jesus reported in the New Testament, with one exception, were confined to the forty days between Easter and the ascension. After that his followers no longer saw him physically. The exception was Paul on the Damascus road. Paul says of that encounter: "Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me." From time to time there have been other mystics who seem to have had a genuine vision of Christ. Christians as a whole, however, have felt him rather as a Presence mediated through the normal experiences of personality. This Presence has been so real as to make of the resurrection an ongoing conviction of Christian believers.

There was something about those first appearances which is a clue for us as to how we too can experience the reality of the resurrection. Look

closely at some of the incidents. Mary upon finding the tomb empty, promptly told Peter and John. These two raced to the garden to see for themselves. Satisfied that it was true, they went back to their homes. Mary, however, returned to the tomb where she burst into tears. When Jesus appeared and talked to her she mistook him to be the gardener. She recognized him only after he spoke her name. It was then that Mary rushed to tell her fellow believers, "I have seen the Lord."

Look also at the case of Cleopas and his companion. Jesus walked the seven miles from Jerusalem to Emmaus with them, "But their eyes were kept from recognizing him." Not until he broke bread with them did they see that their guest was the Lord. With that he vanished. They hurried back to Jerusalem to tell the apostles, where they learned that Peter had seen him too. Even as they talked about it, Jesus came again. They thought he was a spirit until he convinced them of his real bodily presence.

A similar thing happened to seven of the apostles on Lake Galilee as they were nearing the shore after a night of unsuccessful fishing. Jesus awaited them unrecognized even after they talked with him. Recognition came finally to John who said, It is the Lord."

From these accounts we see that not only did Jesus appear to comparatively few persons, but also that recognition hinged upon a delicate sensitivity on the part of those persons. It is probable also that some people standing right beside those who saw him did not even sense that he was there. I am by no means suggesting that seeing Jesus was the product of wishful thinking and excited imaginations. The event was very real. There was an empty grave with only the burial clothes in it. The body of our Lord was not stolen and removed to another place. The body that was buried was transformed into something no longer subject to ordinary

physical laws, something that was at times materialized and recognized.

To paraphrase Paul: It was sown a physical body, and raised a spiritual body." Yet there was a continuity between the two. The personality of the physical body was recognized as continuing in the spiritual body, which incidentally is one of our reasons for believing in recognition beyond the grave.

II

What I am trying to say is that though the resurrection was an objective fact, the awareness of it depended upon being tuned in. That awareness was given by God to those who had pledged themselves to Jesus before he went to the cross. The key to the matter lies in the relationship between crucifixion and resurrection. So it has been since the first Easter day. Christ lives now as the Risen and Ascended Redeemer. He shares in the glory which he renounced in order to be born among us. But you and I can't know him first as the Victorious Christ. We must know him first as the Crucified Jesus. There is no Easter without Calvary.

We are tempted to think that if Jesus had come down from the cross and demonstrated his deity there in front of the spectators, the world would have accepted him enthusiastically. Perhaps so. But the more important truth is that he is our saviour because he did not come down from the cross. The fact that he chose to suffer and die is what lifts him above us all, and yet that which also brings him down to where he can reach us. In the closing days of his ministry, he said to the Twelve: "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone, but if it dies, it bears much fruit." Jesus said that of himself, knowing that the time had come for its fulfillment. The rest of the statement is: "He that loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life." If you want to share Christ's

triumph you must identify yourself with his suffering too.

In my denomination the outdoor Easter sunrise service has become an important part of our program of worship. Some of the larger of these services in North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Ohio attract great crowds from distant places. I never participate in these sunrise gatherings without thinking of their origin in the little German village of Herrnhut in the year 1732. That was the year in which a group of dedicated young men at their Easter Eve devotions struck upon the idea of a service of praise at dawn on the cemetery, or God's acre as they called it. It happened to be the same year in which they were praying and planning for their first foreign mission venture. That original sunrise service was a private affair on the part of a few to whom, because of dedicated living, Christ had become so real that almost spontaneously they went out into the dawn to greet him on his day of Resurrection. In the years following, the program they undertook for him put their faith to the test many times. But the more they yielded their lives to him the more clearly did he reveal himself to them.

III

The crowds are greater now. What about their sensitivity to the presence of a living Lord? What about the throngs of people who are attending Easter services today? What are they experiencing? I'm sure that most of them are being helped in some way or other. They are hearing inspiring music, helpful sermons, moving liturgies, joyous professions of faith. Skepticism, doubt and discouragement are on the defensive for a while at least,

with so many people laying these moods aside. Even apart from the Christian side of Easter there is always the sense of renewal which this spring festival conveys to us. I would not for a moment deny to anyone the thrill of the pageantry of Easter. But I wish more of you from among these throngs were able to say, "I have seen the Lord." You can say it, if you begin at the right place, at the foot of the cross. Remember that Easter is possible only because of a Good Friday. The resurrection is an assurance that Christ can take our lives and transform them into something glorious. He can take our characters and make them over. He can take our weaknesses and change them into strength. Then at the end he can take our bodies and clothe them with immortality. But he can't do that for you unless you let go of your life and hand it over to him. Those persons in the Gospel record who were the first to know about the Easter victory were persons who had done just that. What a risk they had taken. What shame they experienced in seeing their beloved master die. Their reward was to be among the first to be able to say after the resurrection, "I have seen the Lord."

The world is still evil enough for there to be risk in handing ourselves over to Christ. No one knows this better than his followers themselves. But think of the reward, the assurances that come to the Christian believer that his Lord is alive. So real and so innumerable have been these assurances that those who can say with Mary, "I have seen the Lord," have become a multitude. Her quiet whisper has become a mighty chorus.

THE EASTER VIEW OF LIFE

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Life is a tale told by an idiot.—Shakespeare
I am the resurrection and the life.—John 11:25

There stands Macbeth, a solitary, melancholy figure. He has achieved

his ambition. He has become king. But ambition has thwarted his soul

and perverted his life. To attain his goal he has plotted, intrigued, and killed. His past deeds close in on him. In his depression comes the fateful announcement concerning his wife — "The queen, my Lord, is dead." — and Macbeth gives us the philosophy of a beaten man,

"She should have died hereafter
There would have been a time
for such a word.

Tomorrow, and tomorrow and
tomorrow,

Creeps in this petty pace from
day to day

To the last syllable of recorded
time;

And all our yesterdays have
lighted fools

The way to dusty death. Out,
out, brief candle!

Life's but a walking shadow, a
poor player

That struts and frets his hour
upon the stage

And then is heard no more: it is
a tale

Told by an idiot, full of sound
and fury

Signifying nothing."

Alongside that text place this one from the eleventh chapter of the gospel of John. These words were spoken by another king, a King of kings: "I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord; he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me, shall never die."

All mankind, in its religious faith, hangs suspended between these two creeds. To some we are poor players who strut and fret our hour upon the stage and then are heard no more. In contrast, others believe that Jesus of Nazareth had an experience in which we share. He lived so closely to his God in spiritual fellowship that, when his physical body died, his contact had been so intimate, that the ties between him and his God could not be broken. Our faith teaches that we too live into eternity. The relation-

ship between us and our God will not die with our bodies, but will live forever.

I

On this day of victory let us look at these two philosophies. Those same extremes of faith we find in that first Easter season. Observe three groups in action. Jesus had been crucified. When he died, he was taken down from the cross and laid in a tomb. They rolled a rock to the door of the tomb. And then everybody went home. Practically all of them believed that the conclusion had been written. Those soldiers, who walked away from the tomb, thought life meaningless. They lived from day to day. They were nonchalant about the future. Today we fight; tomorrow we die. They drew a curtain over the future. They went where they were sent; they did what they were told. Today we battle; tonight we celebrate; tomorrow we die. These soldiers, knowing that death lurked at every corner, could also say: "Out, out, brief candle." They may have been happier than Macbeth, but their future was just as bleak.

The second group we watch on that first Easter was the Sanhedrin. It brought Jesus to trial. These religious leaders would listen to no talk of change. Their philosophy of life and of death was more hopeful than that of the soldiers. But their faith was academic. It came from books and statutes. They lived by tradition. If someone had done it beforetime, it was good. But if it had never been tried, it was bad — and therefore anathema. They had a philosophy of life and of death, but it was rooted in the past and in books.

There was a third philosophy held by another group which walked away from that tomb. That was the group which followed Jesus. Watch them as they pass. This man had been a raging demoniac, but Jesus had laid hold on him. Now he no longer feared Satan. Here walks a prostitute, forgiven by his love. There goes a child

welcomed into religious fellowship by a tender hand. They, too, had a philosophy of life and of death. In their despair, some of them may have believed that "all our yesterdays have led to this dusty death." Some of them in their loyalty to the Jewish law may have found hope in the teachings of the Sanhedrin. But there were others who remembered the words of the Master: "I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me, shall never die."

II

Today we still believe as did those soldiers, Sanhedrin, Jesus-followers. You cannot place every man in one position only. Most of us live in all three groups. One day we believe as Macbeth. Our philosophy rules us only at a time. Then one day we adhere to the rules of the Sanhedrin. We go to the books to find the academic answers. At another time our faith is high. We have found the Christian answer.

How do we fall into these different classes? Why are we not always of the same state of mind? How do we lift ourselves by our bootstraps from one class to another? Can we build a religious faith which will keep us out of the lower class and keep us in the upper class? Let us look at each class in turn.

Part of our lives we live as did these soldiers, and "life is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing." We are flesh and bones — nothing more. The soul is non-existent. What makes us feel that way? Maybe we are ashamed of our lives. We don't want a resurrection wherein our records will be scanned and our motives scrutinized. We aren't proud of our past. In our better moments we want to sweep those books clean. But there stands our biography, and we are ashamed of it. We unconsciously choose that life will be meaningless. We choose this philosophy when we are depressed,

when life has turned against us, when we have failed. A series of bad experiences can bring a man to this philosophy. The resurrection is an empty dream, and life's but a walking shadow.

On other days we are lifted out of that depression and lifted into that academic life where we pursue the reasons for believing in immortality. Then we read the scholars, and we fall back on tradition. We read John Donne, the great religious genius of the 17th century:

Death, be not proud, though
some have called thee
Mighty and dreadful, for thou art
not so;
For those whom thou thinkest
thou dost overthrow
Die not, poor Death; nor yet canst
thou kill me.
Thou'rt slave to fate, chance,
Death shall be no more; Death,
thou shalt die!

Or we read Seneca, the stoic Roman philosopher: "This life is only a prelude to eternity. . . . For that which we call death is but a pause, in truth a progress into life." Or we read the modern Walt Whitman:

Joy, shipmate, joy!
Pleased to my soul at death I cry,
Our life is closed, our life begins,
The long, long anchorage we
leave,
The ship is clear at last, she
leaps!
She swiftly courses from the
shore,
Joy, shipmate, joy!

Or we go to the scientists and let them speak to us, or see what the philosophers are saying.

We have our better days when we feel that tradition, the scholars and the learned have discovered the way. Then we are not depressed. We have not had a series of bad experiences. We insist that "dust thou art, to dust returnest, was not spoken of the soul." Life is meaningful because people are intelligent. But we must have

more proof than this to believe in the permanence of the soul.

III

Remember that third group which walked away from the tomb — the friends of Jesus. They did not hold one standard of faith. Some had no more faith than the soldiers; others believed that they would see Him again as He had said. Remember the Easter truth that those who beheld His glory on that Easter day and who believed in Him as having risen, were those with whom he had fellowship. The soldiers never talked about a resurrection. The Sanhedrin did not say that he had risen from the dead. Only those who were in intimate communion with him found the joy of Easter. We too can bring ourselves into that third class by our fellowship with Him. We find immortality through fellowship with a living Teacher. Inasmuch as we learn to know Jesus intimately, in the same measure we find the joy of immortality. Through communion with Him we build a faith. We can ponder over the futility of life; we can read the books and see what someone else has said about immortality; but no way will so bring us to appreciate the joy of Easter as that of experiencing daily fellowship with Jesus of Nazareth. "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in Me shall live." Here is his life. Take daily spiritual exercise. Once you have found him, you

will not lose him. Such close ties cannot be broken.

Immortality is a social experience. You may have read Tennyson's famous poem on immortality entitled "In Memoriam." It was not contemplation of his own death which compelled him to struggle with the problem of immortality. It was the death of his best friend, Arthur Hallam. When that friend died, Tennyson could no longer look at life as a walking shadow. He found faith through intimate contact with his friend. When Keats, at the age of 25, departed this world, Shelley, his friend, began to sing:

He lives, he wakes,

'Tis death is dead: not he.

Those who fellowshiped with Jesus and continued fellowshiping with him after his death, learned to know him. Those early disciples had lived so close to the Master that when he died, they were compelled to think through life's meaning. In their thinking they came to know that Jesus still communed with them. Even Paul, who had never known Jesus in the flesh, could say: "The things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." We can still fellowship with him daily if we read his words. And the Easter story becomes alive to us as we near the words which cheered the hearts of his followers.

AN EASTER EVENING WALK

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I

It is the afternoon of the first Lord's Day when two disciples set out from Jerusalem to Emmaus, a village a few miles west of Jerusalem, although the exact spot is in dispute. One of the two companions was Cleopas, about whom nothing else is known, and the name of the other is a mystery, though some have conjectured that it was the Evangelist, Luke, himself. But his name will likely be forever uniden-

tified. The two men we believe were not apostles, but belonged to the rank and file of Jesus' followers. They were no doubt highly esteemed by the apostles, and by Jesus, too, for He on this occasion sought their company.

The object of their journey we do not know, but we do know their thoughts. They are retrospective. Their faces are toward Emmaus, but their thoughts are back at sad, dark

salvary. Physically speaking, they have left the blood-stained city behind, but their minds are active about all these things that had happened." They are absorbed in their discussion about One who had been intimately with them and so intimately related to them as the greatest friend they knew, their Master, and their Brother, whom they trusted and loved. This One they had taken to be divine, the Son of God in a sense unique and applicable only to Himself. They felt that He was indispensable to their spiritual life. His character and teaching, His moral and intellectual supremacy amazed them and left an indelible impression on their hearts and lives.

But He had been crucified between two robbers as though He were a common criminal. It was a terribly sudden and sudden termination to such a life, and they were quite unable to understand it. The chief priests mocked Him and said, "He saved others: himself he cannot save." That seemed to be the general impression. And these two men must have thought that in His last suffering Jesus did seem to be helpless, so that His unique claims for himself appeared to be discredited. And even His own disciples were puzzled beyond all expression and were heart-broken at the spectacle of the Cross. They felt that all their hopes were dashed to the ground and the future was black as midnight. So these two men on their way to Emmaus were grieved. All their props were tumbling. No wonder they were downhearted as they walked.

What happens? A stranger overtakes them. He inquires, "What is this conversation which you are holding with each other as you walk?" And they stood still, looking sad. They express surprise that this person should be ignorant of such important facts. "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?" And he said to them,

"What things?" Then they tell him of Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people." Then they give a hurried summary of what had happened, and they said: "We had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. But some women of our company were at the tomb early in the morning and did not find his body, and they came back saying that they had even seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive. And some of those who were with us went to the tomb, and found it just as the woman had said; but him they did not see."

As these two men opened their hearts to this stranger he listens patiently and wonderingly. He was glad no doubt at the evidence which their words and tones afforded that their love for Him was still strong and not extinguished altogether by the tragedy of the Cross and the grave. True, they had walked off into the country in the midst of all their perplexity, and, for all we know, in their impatience and disappointment they were going back to their former ways. And yet, let us not make haste to chide them. Let us be the last to accuse them. For with all their despondency their minds cleave to Him still. If we have infirmity here, we have also something which is worthy of praise. For their one theme is Jesus. They can talk about nothing else.

II

Now, what does the Stranger do for these men? He, of course, shows his kindness and tenderness by coming to them. He might have reasoned: "These men are unworthy of me. Repeatedly I have told them that this very thing would happen, but that I would rise again. Now see how unbelieving they are, how fearful and depressed. What little faith they have. Should I pass them by as unworthy of my time and interest?" But this Stranger was Jesus! And His name is Love. A bruised reed He will not break. After His Resurrec-

tion he will show the same patience and forgiveness he showed to Peter and John and the other weak disciples. If men are "slow of heart to believe," He is still slower to reprimand and be angry, but rather comforts the downcast. So Jesus joins these two men on the road because He exercises mercy.

What else happened as the three went along together? The Stranger proceeded to show them that the events which made them feel so dejected were parts of God's age-long purpose which is found in the Old Testament. "He interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself." In this way He held these men entranced while their hearts burned within them until they reached Emmaus.

Then the Stranger appeared to be going further. But as evening was falling they invited him to stay with them, and he accepts their hospitality. The evening meal was spread and they take their place at the table. The Stranger was the guest, but he assumes the part of host. As He took the bread and blessed and broke it, and gave it to them," in the old familiar way and using perhaps the very words they had heard him use before, their eyes were opened. They saw that the face too had changed and now wore the features of the Jesus they had known. They knew him. But before they could seize his hand he "vanished out of their sight." The rest of this amazing chapter we must read for ourselves.

Now, what took place on that Emmaus road so long ago is not just ancient history; it is something that is happening still. For the Resurrection of Jesus was a fact, and there is no better attested fact in the world's history. What this stupendous fact has meant — and means — to Christ's followers is far beyond all language to express. For the Resurrection is the evidence on which the disciples preached the Gospel and founded the Church. This cannot be too strongly

emphasized, for apart from the Resurrection and a living Christ the whole Christian structure falls to pieces. Because Christ is alive forevermore, sinful, defeated and discouraged men can be made "more than conquerors" as they share His risen life and He helps them to meet temptation. "The Lord stood by me and gave me strength." In a very dark hour of Paul's life he had this experience with the Risen Christ, the very Christ of the Emmaus road.

III

Christ still surprises us by coming to us and making himself known. He belongs to this twentieth century as truly as to the first century. He is "the same yesterday and today and forever." As real as when He lived, as loved, and toiled, and died, and rose from the grave, and ascended. He is nearer to every one of us than any words can describe. Brought up in a Christian home, a minister's home, I remember hearing my father say, "Jesus is my dearest, most familiar friend." How real He was to my father all his life through! Every one who knew him realized that. Rev. Leslie Weatherhead, minister of the famous City Temple in London, England, wrote this: "Is there any miracle in the world greater than this, that at this moment He is nearer to us than to Mary in the garden, that He calls our name, needs our love, pleads for our discipleship, longs for our loyalty." In another place this author says: "He can still take charge of our feeble little lives and, by His transforming friendship, make them bright and pure and good." The Master whom Peter loved I may love. The Christ who loved children so much and took them up in His arms and blessed them will do the same for your children. He still stands before every grave and says, "Whosoever lives and believes in me shall not die."

We are dealing here with the greatest fundamental — our relation to this living Christ. Is your life

ertwined with His life? Dr. James Stewart, Chaplain to the Queen in Scotland, writes: "We have a living, eternally present Lord to set our hearts on fire, to love and to be loved by for ever." St. Paul exclaimed, "To live is Christ." That is Christianity. This is the permanent meaning of the Resurrection. Christ arose, and wants to live in us. This, at least

in part, is the Easter message. Let us open our lives to the living Christ, for our own sake, and because it is only the Christ-filled and Christ-dedicated life that becomes a channel of His grace and power, and will help to hasten the day when "all nations shall serve him" and the whole earth will be filled with His glory.

SHEAF OF PASTORAL PRAYERS

Lowell M. Atkinson, First Methodist Church, Engelwood, New Jersey

Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, Thou who hast lighted our way in Jesus Christ so that there is now light and hope for all the world in Him, we praise Thy name. We ask that Thou wilt let Thy light shine upon our own lives that goodness may be seen as splendid as it really is, that unselfishness may become a thing of shining splendor for us, that thoughtfulness of others may be the very quality of our spirit as we live in Christ.

We pray that Thou wilt take away from us all the things that obstruct our spiritual vision, the cataracts of the soul that shut out the light of Thy truth, the sins that block our vision of Thee which is given only to the pure of heart. Wilt Thou enable us with the eyes of faith to see the glory of Thy character, the wonder of Thy perfection. May we enter into the glory of Thy presence.

Wilt Thou bless all this congregation gathered together here to worship Thee. Wilt Thou lighten the load of those who are burdened. Wilt Thou give larger vision to those who are too much obsessed with the things close at hand. Wilt Thou give peace to those who are in sorrow, encouragement to those who find the daily walk tedious, challenge to those who are not fully entering into life. Grant to all of us a full measure of Thy grace, a closer walk with Thee. May we taste of those blessings that Thou dost provide even in this life and which are but a foretaste of the life to come.

Strengthen this church in every fine and good way. And grant that we may live stalwartly for Thy truth, and that we may with enthusiasm carry onward the banner of our Lord, Jesus Christ. In His name we lift this prayer. Amen.

II

Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, we thank Thee for the good gift of life that Thou hast given us. We rejoice in the privilege of renewing that gift of life in this time of sacred worship. We invoke Thy blessing upon our spirit, that we may find life exalted and lifted up to higher levels of understanding and praise, because we have been here. We pray that we may be receptive to Thy spirit, that we may hear Thy truth with joy, and with patience bring forth fruit in good works in this world. We ask that Thou wilt help us so to live and so to select the fine and good things of life from among the great clutter of things that are all about, that we may become worthy and productive members of Thy holy kingdom and contribute mightily to that sacred fellowship of those who love Thee.

We ask that Thy blessing may be upon all of our worship: the prayers in every heart, the unspoken aspirations of each soul, the quiet and holy longings of each person, the undefined resolves to live the good life that now may come into clear expression and focus. Bless all of our worthy intentions, strengthen in us all that is good, encourage in us all that is

fine. Wilt Thou also purge from our lives the chaff, the things that are but transient values. Grant that the unworthy thoughts, the unwholesome ambitions may be struck a death blow by Thy powerful spirit. Wilt Thou discipline us to steadfastness and patience in the pursuing of Thy holy will. Wilt Thou lead us patiently and carefully along the right ways. Guide us through all the hazards of this our life. May our confidence ever be in Thee, through sunshine or storm, trusting in Thy sure providence.

We pray for all who have special need of Thee this day. Wilt Thou give to them the dynamic inspiration that is at the heart of affliction. Wilt Thou bless all of our people who have problems in their homes, problems in their hearts. Ease the stress and strain of life and bring Thy peace. And may each of us have the Shepherd's concern for other people; and may we together make such a network of understanding and affection in Thy name that each may be helped by all.

We pray for this troubled world about us. Across the storms of life may we hear that deeper voice that comes from Thy greater world; and may we know that with our confidence resting in Thee, all is well. Guide and bless us in every good way. For we ask these mercies in the Saviour's name, even Christ our Lord. Amen.

III

Our Heavenly Father we come with eager hearts and happy spirits into Thy presence. We invoke Thy blessing upon us that all of life may be quickened and given fresh spiritual energy and moral power. We ask that Thy spirit of love and compassion may so discipline our spirits that selfishness and bitterness and harshness may disappear, and that we may look upon our fellow men with eyes of understanding and kindness. We pray that this time of worship may be a time of empowerment when the mind is illumined and the character

is given a new sturdiness and the soul finds refreshment in Thy living presence. May it also be a time of complete personal consecration to Thee when we rejoice that we have a God of friendly goodwill, coming to us with the offer of grace and mercy and salvation. Grant that in our prayers we may lift our hearts and our spirits to Thee in consecration, that we may offer ourselves to the service of Thy holy will.

We pray for all who are sick, for the many who are not able to be here with us. We pray for all who are anxious or concerned about loved ones. We pray for those whose lives have come upon hours of turbulence or confusion. To all Thy people, grant Thy healing mercy.

Now we ask that Thou wilt hear us in every prayer from every heart, that the touch of Thy holy spirit may be in every home, that Thou mayest lead us into that finer, deeper fellowship of the spirit, revealing to us those durable satisfactions of life that the world can neither give nor understand.

Be with us in this time of worship and go with us our several ways, keeping us always in the light of Thy love and in the wonder of Thy presence. These mercies we ask in the Saviour's name. Amen.

IV

OFFERTORY PRAYERS

Our Heavenly Father, from Thy hand we receive the good things of this life, and the promise of life eternal. Now we give to Thee these gifts as evidence of our gratitude and love, giving thanks always in our thoughts to Thee for Thy wonderful grace. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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Our Heavenly Father, we rejoice in our privilege of being in Thy presence. Wilt Thou now accept these gifts, as offerings that show forth our love for Thee. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.